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G. H. Clarke

ADDRESS,

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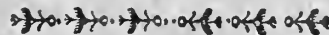
OF

DICKINSON COLLEGE,

January, 15th, 1822.



BY J. M. MASON, PRINCIPAL.



CARLISLE.

GEORGE PHILLIPS, PRINTER,

1822.

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ADDRESS, &c.

GENTLEMEN OF THE TRUSTEES

AND RESPECTED AUDITORS,

I address you this day under circumstances of peculiar delicacy and difficulty. Dickinson College, which had long languished, and at last expired is about being revived again. It comports with neither my inclination nor design, to institute insidious enquiries into the causes of its former failure. With great and good men you were favoured in more auspicious times. For depth of learning, for accuracy of information, for splendour of wit, the name of Dr. Nesbit will long be remembered: and the memory of his successors, who followed him, although it must be confessed *haud passibus æquis*, will be reverend and revered while piety is honoured in Carlisle.

Many causes conspire to elevate and depress seminaries of learning, without great personal merit on the one hand, or personal demerit, on the other. Over the vicissitudes which have happened to this one, it would answer no good purpose to dwell; and it would savour too much of a vanity which would but ill become those who are now entrusted

with its management, to make boastful professions, and encourage high expectations of its future progress. Their labours have already been too highly appreciated; their powers have, perhaps, been too much applauded: The country has been taught to expect more from them than their talents and industry shall probably be found to justify; and they will have reason to think themselves happy above the common condition of men in their situation, if they shall not altogether disappoint the public anticipation.

The revival of a decayed institution, being much more difficult than the establishment of a new one, as the resurrection of a dead body is more arduous; and certainly more uncommon, than the production of a living one; and as all the success humanly speaking, will depend upon the plan to be pursued it may be due to the occasion to say a few words on a subject on which every body talks confidently, and few think correctly, while the million prate without thinking at all—the subject of EDUCATION.

Education, if I mistake not, contemplates three objects, the evolution of *faculty*, the formation of *habits*, and the cultivation of *manners*.

I The evolution of faculty—This, of course, implies, that there is faculty to be evolved. So, that like all created power, education must have its materials from the hand of the Creator. Itself creates nothing. It only brings out qualities which pre-existed. It is a manufacture, and, like all other manufactures must have the raw material to work upon, or it can do nothing. Many well meaning people imagine that it is in the power of teachers to do every thing: and hard measure do they give them for not working miracles—for not converting a booby into a lad of genius. My friends, you

to the happiness of parents, to the peace of the surrounding neighbourhood, to the glory of the land ?

On this, which is a large theme, I shall briefly advert to two habits, which though of apparently minor importance, mingle themselves with all the duties and occasions of life.

I. *Subordination to authority.* I regret to say that in all the departments of society, from the parental control to that of the government, this is held by our youth in too little esteem. Their ambition, very early evinced, is to be mainly and to be free. They are, therefore, prone to spurn restraint, and to take their own way : esteeming that to be a noble spirit which acknowledges no superiour; and that to be true liberty which follows its own pleasure. That the prevalence of such a temper should produce wide spreading mischief, is manifest to every sound thinker; and often to the youth themselves when it is too late to undo the consequences. In the mean time it militates alike against the very constitution of our nature—against the most express commandments of God—and against those principles of action which, at all times and in every place, but from peculiar causes, in the present day and in our own country, are necessary to the order of society and the happiness of individuals.

It militates against the very *constitution of our nature*. It is not for nothing ; it is for benign and wise purposes, that our creator has determined we should come into the world utterly feeble and helpless. The first friend whom the infant recognizes, is his mother. To her tenderness, her watchfulness, her patience, he probably owes more than to the kindness of any of his species. Under her gentle auspices the first buddings of his rational nature begin to unfold. To her is allotted the delightful province of teaching “ the young idea how to shoot,” of mould-

ing the heart—of cherishing all its amiable and generous affections—of storing it with the “sweet charities” of life—of leading it in filial piety, to God the sovereign good. The rudiments of many a character distinguished for virtues honoured both on earth and in heaven, can be traced to the nursery and the lap. O most charming employment ! rich compensation for the seclusion, the anxieties the pains, to which the sex is destined ! O most refreshing abatement of the sorrows of that cup which has been assigned to woman for her priority in transgression !

Then comes the father, appointed by the divine mandate to be the head of the domestic establishment. His family is his kingdom ; his children are his subjects; and he is the governour in his own house. These young subjects are submitted to his rule : he knows best, at least better than they, what is for their good. His authority is to be their reason for many, for most things while they are quite young. And should they prove refractory, his superiour physical force can, and should, constrain their submission. If therefore, *both* parents perform their duty, their children, notwithstanding the dreadful draback of human depravity, will generally grow up trained to obedience. Their habits will be incorporated into their character. They cannot become rude and disorderly without violating all the sense of decorum and gratitude ; and breaking through, besides, all their early habits. The common sense of mankind is in accordance with all this. A rough, surly, ungovernable, boy, there is nothing more common than to call an *unnatural child*. Thus are children, by the very condition of their being, made fit subjects for *order* which “is Heaven’s first law.” And he who requites his parents care, by vicious courses, by giving himself up to the

service of iniquity, which is the essential *disorder*, though he should be one of the "fairest spirits," that ever "lost heaven," and should be plausible and seducing as Belial himself, deserves no other appellation than that of a *monster*.

The spirit of insubordination, moreover, militates against the *most express commands of God himself*.

His commandments are in unison with the constitution of his world. From the highest to the lowest, their tendency is to promote order. His very controversy with sin and sinners turns exactly upon this point, whether HE shall govern his own creation, or they shall do as they please. And, therefore, there is no regulation of human conduct prescribed with more peremptoriness, and under greater variety of forms, than obedience to law. This broad injunction covers the whole ground of our social relations, "Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord." The admonition is addressed to them when they are of years to reflect, and successfully to resist. No thanks to you, young people, if you obey when you cannot, and dare not, disobey. Everlasting reproach be to your parents if they permit such early insubordination—But when you are grown to have some understanding of your own; when your physical strength enable you to defy both mother and father, then the voice from the excellent glory speaks unto you: "My son receive the instruction of thy father," and adds, with unutterable tenderness, "despise not thy mother *when she is old*." So also, with respect to servants: "Servants, be obedient to your masters according to the flesh." So likewise with respect to political government. "Put them in mind to obey magistrates. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or to

“governours, as unto those that are sent by him for the
 “punishment of evil doers and for the praise of them
 “that do well.”

A young man, therefore, who cherishes a temper of disobedience toward his superiours, plants himself down in a path where the machinery, established by his maker, must go, and will infallibly crush him to atoms.

Once more. This spirit of insubordination militates against those *principles* of action which at all times and in every place, but *especially in our own day and country*, are necessary to the peace of society, and to the happiness of individuals. I shall waive the first part of this proposition, for the sake of the second.—

We live in a republican country. Its means of keeping up good government are entirely moral. The government of force it rejects as fit only for slaves. What then shall become of the public order, if our youth, who are shortly to be the governours, cherish a spirit of disorder? What of republican government, and of our country, which has been called “the world’s last hope?” Wherein shall we be able to compare with the governments of Europe, which we term despotic, if we ourselves exhibit a spirit of misrule, and hasten, by our own imprudence, the approach of that day when the coercion of the bayonet shall be necessary to bring us to our senses?

2. There is another habit of immense value in all the concerns of life—I mean the *proper employment and distribution of time*.

Of Time, more precious than rubies, and of which, of all the three score and ten years which form the limit of by far the greater portion of men upon earth, only the *present moment* is our own!

Young people always calculate upon futurity, and

almost always neglect the passing hour; that is, they speculate upon that in which they have no interest, and squander away that in which they have. It would terrify men beyond the power of expression, would they realize that the 'breath in their nostrils' is all that they can claim! that the present pulsation of their hearts, gives them no assurance that they shall have a pulsation more! Yet upon this brittle, uncertain tenure, hangs their computation for both worlds! How immense, then the importance of learning to make the most of what they have! How can that be learned more effectually, than by having the intervals of time filled up; and a constant pressure upon the mind to make every one of them *tell*. Idleness is universally the parent of vice, and it is one of the most fruitful sources of Juvenile corruption, that they have so many hours in which they *have nothing to do!* Your own famous Rittenhouse used to say that he once thought *health* the most precious of all human possessions! Is it not? exclaimed an astonished visitor; what then is it? "Time." replied the sage, "Time!" Instead, therefore, of having a great deal of time loose upon their hands, youth are most kindly and wisely dealt with, by their having none, or next to none. And of how much value it will be hereafter, to acquire the habit of being always *busy*, let those determine who are the most active and efficient men in the various walks of public and private industry.

III. I have said that education includes the cultivation of *manners*. I mean by *manners* all those lighter things in conduct, which though they do not occupy the rank of *morals*, do yet belong to the embellishments and ornaments of life.

I hardly know how it has happened, that a "scholar," is become a common term for every thing unpolished and uncouth. Some men, indeed, by the

greatness of their genius, and the immensity of their erudition, have attained a sort of privileged exemption from the common courtesies of society. But the misery is that the same exemption is claimed by those who have only rudeness, which they mistake for genius; and disregard of civility, which passes with them for erudition. Thus, if scholars are sometimes awkward and absent, every awkward, inattentive creature calls himself a scholar. Just as, to use a comparison of the late Mr. Gouverneur Morris, "because statesmen have been called knaves, every knave should, of course, suppose himself a statesman." Certain however, it is, that no young men have enjoyed the reputation of being ill-bred, unmannerly, and vulgar, more than Students of Colleges. How is this? Is there any thing in the retreats of the muses to cherish ferocity? Do men necessarily become brutes, when the world gives them credit for becoming philosophers? Does the acquisition of science, especially moral science, involve the destruction of decency? So that after a young man has left college laden with all its honours, he has again to be put to school, in practical life, before he can be fit for the company of gentlemen and ladies? I blush to think that the place, which of all others, is supposed to teach a young man manners, is *the army*: That the kindness, the courtesy, the chivalry of life, should be associated with the trade of blood! That the pistol and the dagger, should be the measure of morals and of politeness, with *gentlemen*: and that when they have trampled under their feet every law of God and man; and all that is dear to human happiness, and ought to be of high account in human society, is made the sport of momentary passion, they should still be allowed to pass for men of *breeding*, and *honor*! "There is something rotten in the state of Denmark!"

The old adage, though not true in the extent to

which it has been carried, is yet true in a great degree,

“ Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes,

“ Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.”

Let the “molles mores,” of the sons of Dickinson, shew that they have faithfully studied the “artes ingenuas.”

This intellect it is true, cannot be evolved ; nor these habits formed; nor these manners cultivated, without exact government. Let not my young friends be startled by the terms *exact government*. I do not mean the government of brute force: nor the government of mere stern authority. I know that these methods have been sometimes tried, and have always failed : and I scruple not to say ought always to fail. Some men have imagined the youth of our country to be naturally ferocious, and have applied to them the same sort of means as they would have applied to an intractable beast—Some men, have again, supposed that there is no way of supporting their authority, but by distance, by austerity, by menace. I am neither disappointed nor displeased, at their complete discomfiture. And I am free to confess that if there be not something in the character and carriage of the governor which, of its own accord, invites confidence and ensures respect, all artificial substitutes will speedily prove their insufficiency.

With respect to the accusation which has frequently been brought against our youth, of their being more untoward and unruly than youth of other countries, at their age, and in their circumstances, I must take the liberty to call this a mere calumny. And must say further that when such conduct has been evinced, in any considerable degree, the fault has been at least much in the governors as in the governed. I have been young my-

self and have not forgotten my youthful feelings. I never could find in my heart, nor see in my fellows, the smallest disposition to act with any contumely towards a man who knew how to treat us as gentlemen ; nor with any respect towards a man who did not. Let this rule be freely and fairly applied. I submit to all the consequences, and I think I may answer for my colleagues. I am full well aware of the peril of this declaration, but have no inclination to shun it. I can speak, and I hope may speak, on this occasion, without the charge of egotism, from my own experience. For more than twenty years I came into immediate contact with the children of a large congregation—for nearly fifteen years it was my lot to direct the studies of young men for the christian ministry—and for five years of that period I was called to the government of one of our most considerable colleges ; and in all the time, I never met with an instance of personal disrespect from a young person in any one of them. I have no fear of it now ; for I cannot suppose that the youths of Dickinson will impose on me the necessity of making them a dishonorable exception.

What then is the government which ought to be pursued, and will perform such miracles among young men ? One which is very plain, very simple, though unhappily not very common ; and one which will carry the process through from a family up to a nation. The whole secret consists in being *reasonable*, being *firm*, and being *uniform*.

1. In being *reasonable*. Whatever you require, must be such as cannot fairly be objected to: such as belong to the situation, of your pupil, his duties, and his time of life. It is a very strong point gained to have his conscience on your side. You are not to demand what he is unable to perform. And if such happen to be his situation, it must be altered accord-

ingly. Great care must then be taken to see that your commands *are* reasonable; this matter being settled, I say

2, That a good government ought to be *firm*. Intreaty and supplication ought to have no more influence upon its proceedings, than upon the bench of the Supreme court ; and a youth should count no more upon its pliancy. I do not mean to assert, that a teacher or governour of youth should never acknowledge an error; or that he should obstinately adhere to a thing because he has said or ordered it. He is a miserable pauper whom the loss of a six pence will bankrupt ; and in intellectual matters he is no richer, who cannot afford to confess a mistake. He must not, indeed, do this often. But occasionally, as *humanum est errare*, he may, by owning that he has been mistaken, doing it freely, doing it magnanimously, attach the affections of the youth very strongly to his person, and affirm his authority by those very means which would weaken it in an undecided and incapable man.

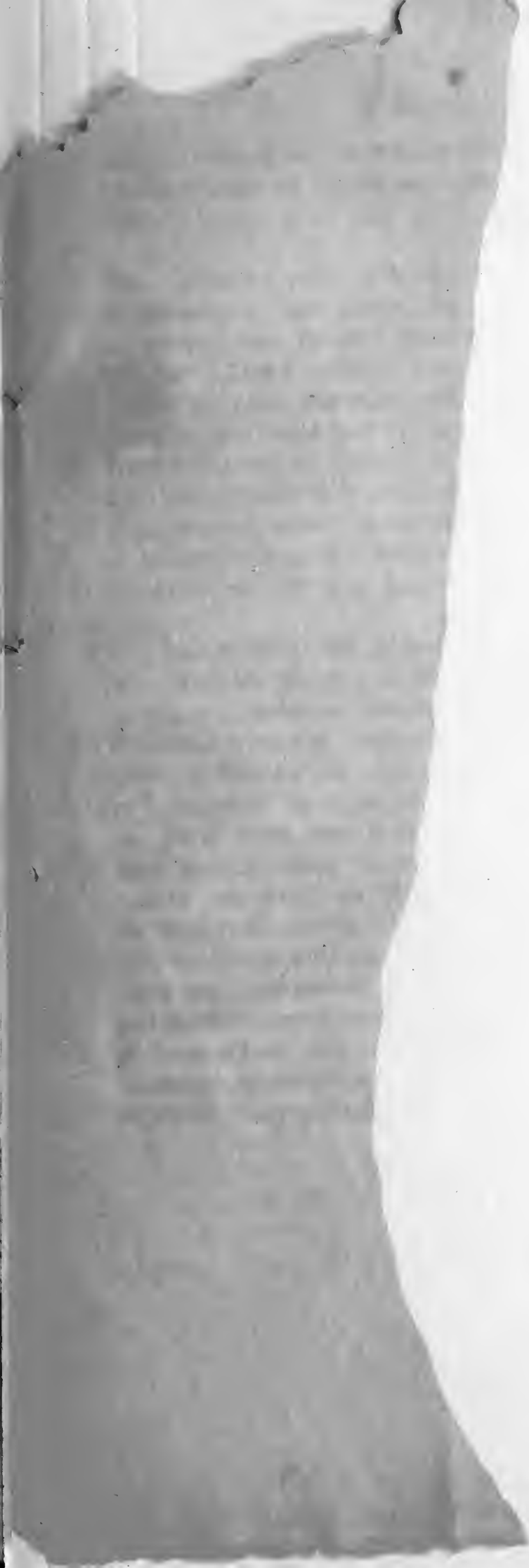
3. I add, once more, that a government, to be good for any thing, must be *uniform*. By uniform, I mean that it shall be habitually the same thing; that when you have its decisions at one time, you know where to find them at another : that it shall not be marked by whim: shall not be moved out of its course by gusts of passion : shall not, in a fit of great good humour, allow to day what in a fit of ill-humour, it will forbid to-morrow. Shall not therefore tease and vex the subjects of it by its fickleness, and variableness. These should always know what they have to depend upon; and not see the elements of *order* disturbed and broken up, by the prevalence of official *disorder*.

Against a government administered upon such principles, and marked in its several acts by courte-

sy, by kindness, by the frankness and dignity of gentlemen, I am persuaded that depravity herself could not muster up any thing like a formidable conspiracy.

Such, gentlemen, we profess to be our aim ; and in the prosecution of such an aim we feel confident of your support. Although we do not expect to have much, if any, reason to apply for it. We do hope, that an appeal to the understanding, the magnanimity, the conscience, of the students, will effectually preclude these scenes of misrule which have occasionally tarnished the history of other Colleges ; and that affection will do for us, what the exercise of mere authority has not been able to do for others, attach the students more and more to the interests of their *Alma mater*.

After all, young gentlemen, the students of this institution, her success is, in a great measure, in your hands. Have we deceived ourselves in expecting from you, a chivalrous sense of moral honour ? A delicate, noble sensibility, to character, and all the decencies and elegance of character ? a high respect for order and decorum, even in slighter matters ? an ardent love of your studies, and corresponding industry ? If we have not ; if our expectations are well founded ; if you shall bear us out in our hopes respecting you ; then shall our efforts be animated, our labours sweetened, our success cheering : and Dickinson College revive from her desolations, a phoenix of renewed life, and spreading her lustre over your county, your state, your country, be a source of mild and enduring glory in ages to come.



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